



Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program

Emergency Management Division
Washington Military Department

Background

The U.S. Army is required by law to eliminate its stock of unitary chemical munitions by the year 2007. The Umatilla Chemical Depot (UMCD) in northeast Oregon is one of eight sites in the nation where stored chemical weapons will be destroyed. At the UMCD, on-site incineration has been selected by the Army as the preferred destruction method. Emergency response planning and preparation to safeguard the public has been underway in Washington since 1989 through the state Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP).

Construction of an incineration plant at the UMCD began in March 1997 and was ready for the first phase of operational testing in May 2002. At that time, the Oregon Governor's Office was required by the Oregon environmental permitting process to sign a letter, which documented acceptable levels of preparedness in the off-post community. The letter was signed by Oregon Governor Kitzhaber in June 2002. The testing phase using sureget agent is scheduled to take nine months. Once the plant is fully operational, it will require approximately five years to destroy the UMCD stockpile.

Services

Sophisticated computer equipment and software, and a communications and alert/warning system were installed in Benton County by Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division (EMD) staff to provide rapid warning and response. This effort has increased overall emergency management capabilities at state and local levels by augmenting current state systems.

Accomplishments

Through the CSEP Program, the state has received over \$ 30 million from the federal government since 1989. More than half of the total amount has gone to Benton County for program support and equipment. Accomplishments to date include construction of a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Benton County, the installation of a computer and telephone network in both the state and Benton County EOCs, installation of a microwave communications network and an 800 MHz communications system in Benton County, purchase of three minivans for Plymouth School and the installation of twenty sirens along the Columbia River in southern Benton County, as well as specialized training for local emergency responders. A command and control network of 800 MHz portable and mobile radios has been installed in select state and county emergency vehicles. A total of 550 tone alert radios are being installed in affected households and businesses in the county. Each affected household also will receive a "Shelter-In-Place" kit to use in the home if evacuation is not possible. Five fire districts and five hospitals in the area have received decontamination, medical, and personal protective equipment. Each of the fire districts has trailers to move the equipment to established access control points in Benton and Walla Walla Counties. Ten highway reader board signs and two highway advisory radios have been installed on area roads to assist in directing traffic. Affected hospitals and fire districts have received personal protective and chemical agent monitoring equipment to facilitate their response to access control and decontamination stations.

- Future** Over the next six years, the federal government has pledged to continue financial support for the Washington CSEP Program through the end of the agent destruction process. The funding will be used to upgrade existing equipment, refine plans, and continue training activities.
- Contact** For more information, please contact Steve DeBow, State Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program Manager, at (253) 512-7066, or e-mail s.debow@emd.wa.gov.